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ABSTRACT

The current status of career education combines continued interest and enthusiasm with problems and shortcomings relating to implementation, quantity and quality of programs, attitudes, and the need for collaboration. Four major attitudinal problems currently face career education. The problem of costs arises from those who think anything inexpensive is not worthwhile and from those who expect major educational change to be accompanied by massive Federal support. The problem of control is brought on because various labor, business, and educational organizations want a say in determining the materials and methods of career education. A third problem involves various educational factions feeling that something will be taken away from them by career education, that a collaborative effort will nullify their special skills. The fourth problem concerns the promises made (and, generally, left unfulfilled) by career education to students, teachers, parents, and society at large. (PR)

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CAREER EDUCATION: STRATEGIES AND DILEMMAS

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Introduction

In 1962, I appeared before this group and asked your help in fostering the development of post high school vocational-technical education. Today, I come asking your help in fostering implementation of the career education concept. The basic dynamics involved are, to me, strikingly similar in that now, as then, I was convinced of (a) the importance of the concept, (b) the crucial role state directors of vocational education must play in solving the problem, (c) the absolute necessity for involvement of forces outside vocational education in seeking solutions, and (d) my own inability to formulate a final blueprint for use in solving the problems that seem to me to be present.

Now, as then, I feel much more knowledgeable about the problem than the solution. If, 12 years from now, you have devoted the same amount of energy, expertise, and commitment to career education as you have, during the past 12 years, to the problem of post high school vocational-technical education, I have no doubt but that real progress will have been made. It is in hope that this will occur that I appear before you today.

There are three goals here. First, I want to give you a very brief capsule summary of career educations's current status. Second, I want to characterize and discuss several major attitudinal problems currently facing career education. Finally, I want to leave time to listen to the good advice I know you can give me in terms of suggested problem solving actions.

Current Status of Career Education: A Capsule Summary

Since coming to USOE in February, 1974, I have had opportunity to gather some data, study other data, and observe much regarding career education in the United States. Here, without boring you with statistics, I would like to summarize the current status of career education as it now seems to me. The total picture demands that I give you both some positive and some negative perceptions.

Remarks presented at the State Directors of Vocational Education Leadership Seminar, Columbus, Ohio. September 26, 1974.

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In a positive vein, I think it is safe to say the following: (1) Local school enthusiasm for career education is greater than that seen at the SEA level, but SEA efforts are greater than the current federal effort; (2) Good consensus exists among career education leaders at the national, state, and local levels regarding the basic nature, goals, and implementation strategies for career education; (3) Some positive evidence related to the effectiveness of career education is now present; (4) The professional literature voicing opinions regarding career education continues to be more positive than negative; and (5) The financial base for support of career education has been extended beyond that derived from vocational education monies. Data are available to substantiate each of these observations.

I see no sign that interest in or enthusiasm for career education is on the decline. True, the sources of interest and support have shifted somewhat during the last three years, but that is another matter.

On the negative side, it seems to me that we must face the following kinds of sobering facts: (1) Implementation of career education has occurred primarily at the K-8 level with much less emphasis in our senior high schools and very sparse emphasis at the community college, four year college and university, or adult education levels; (2) The quantity of the career education effort has far outstripped its quality; (3) Career education remains largely a matter of overpromise and under-delivery for such special segments of the population as the poor, the physically and mentally handicapped, minorities, the gifted and talented, and for females; (4) Large segments of the professional education community remain distrustful of career education - and large segments of the general public have not yet even heard of it; and (5) The true collaborative effort - involving the formal educational system, the business-labor-industry-professional-government community, and the home and family - called for by career education has yet to take place.

Such negative facts are, to me, discouraging but not defeating. If I were not convinced that each could be overcome, I would not name them in so specific a fashion. Each fact is, to me, rooted in attitudes that must be changed. I want now to devote the remainder of this paper to a discussion of such attitudes.

Basic Attitudinal Problems Facing Career Education

The common criticisms of career education voiced in the literature grow basically out of misunderstandings. They include such charges as the following: (a) Career education is anti-intellectual; (b) Career education will lower our standards; (c) Career education is anti-humanistic; (d) Career education is trying to keep students out of college; (e) Career education is a subterfuge for the expansion of vocational education; (f) Career education will mean tracking

of students; (g) Career education hasn't been clearly defined; and (h) Career education is inviting external control of our schools. Each of these charges can be and has been answered. (Hoyt, 1974)

The problems I want to discuss here have not, to date, verbalized as part of the career education controversy. In effect, they constitute what might be considered the "hidden agenda" of resistance. I have serious questions regarding how each should be solved. I want here to specify the problems and seek your assistance in solving each.

"Where's the Money?"

The first problem can be characterized as a "where's the money" attitude. The sources of this problem seem to me to be two in number. One source is in those who seem to believe that, if something isn't expensive, it cannot be very important. By judging the importance of a given educational activity only in terms of the proportion of the educational budget allocated to it, they assign career education a low priority because it requires relatively few funds. The second source of this attitude is found in those who have never experienced any major change in American education coming about unless the federal government induced schools to change through providing massive financial support programs. Such persons, upon observing the sizeable federal demonstration grants for career education in the last three years, say, in effect, "I, too, am ready to initiate career education - where's my $500,000?"

Two items - physical plant and equipment costs plus staff salaries - account for over ninety percent of the cost of education. Career education does not demand new buildings or rooms since it is not seen as a separate "course". It does not demand expensive equipment since most of its materials are either "homemade" by teachers and students or donated by the community. It does not require a large staff since its basic rationale calls for all staff members to be involved. For all of these reasons, the amount seen as required for the implementation of career education is bound to represent a relatively small portion of the total educational budget.

To date, my basic strategy has been one of asking school administrators - building principals and superintendents - to assume leadership roles in career education. Reasons for employing this strategy include: (a) Career education demands coordination of all educational personnel and this should be a function of the administrator; (b) Career education is dependent on establishing collaborative relationships with the community which, in turn, depends on basic school policies for which administrators are responsible; (c) I am fearful that, if "career education specialists" are appointed, other staff members will be reluctant to assume career education responsibilities; and (d) I am fearful that any new school program calling for increasing school budgets

substantially will not be well accepted by the taxpayers. Thus, I have been championing a concept that holds that, while career education is exceedingly important, it does not have to be expensive.

Perhaps this strategy is wrong. If so, we must immediately begin to face problems associated with the preparation and employment of career education coordinators and specialists. Such thoughts raise, in my mind, the spector of M.A. and PhD degrees in Career Education, the establishment of certification requirements for career education personnel, and the formulation of something probably called the "American Career Education Association". I am very afraid that, if these things happen, our goal of using career education as an integrative vehicle is doomed to failure. The problem must be discussed. Stated simply, it is "Do we need special personnel in order to operate effective career education programs?" Your advice on this matter would be most deeply appreciated.

"If I Can't Control it, I'm Not Interested"

The second problem can be characterized as a "If I can't control it, I'm not interested" attitude. One of the prime complaints of labor union leaders, for example, is that they are not being consulted regarding work experience and work study aspects of career education. Business leaders want a voice in determining matters related to field trips and the use of their personnel as resource persons in the classrooms. The Council of Chief State School Officers has issued strong statements regarding their leadership rights and responsibilities in career education. The National Education Association leadership has declared that the classroom teacher is the key to a successful career education effort and must be deeply involved in career education program decisions. Even these few examples will serve to illustrate the seriousness of the problem.

Coming closer to home for the vocational education community, it is obvious that some vocational educators lost interest in career education when career education began to voice concerns that extended beyond vocational education. In some states, vocational education funds have been withdrawn from career education with no apparent concern for the effect such withdrawal may have on the total career education movement. It is almost as though, if a given activity is not fully supported by vocational education funds, some vocational educators develop a lack of trust in the activity due largely to the fact that they do not totally control it.

To me, this seems very strange indeed. The AVA resolution on Career Education, passed in Atlanta in 1973, simultaneously expressed a continuing endorsement for career education along with a plea that additional funding sources be found. That resolution, as I read it, said nothing about withdrawing all vocational education funds from the career education movement.

For my part, it makes no more sense for vocational education to move away from career education than for career education to move away from vocational education. Career education and vocational education need each other. As career education moves beyond vocational education, it must be sure to never move away from the field of vocational education. A very great deal of my energy is, and will continue to be, dedicated to making sure that this does not happen.

The essential strategy I have been using is one of seeking a small amount of money specifically earmarked for career education. I hope to use this money to encourage such additional funds as are needed from all other parts of education and from the business-labor-industry-professional community. This strategy is based on an assumption that control of any enterprise is, in many ways, operationally defined by its funding sources. I have assumed that, if fiscal responsibility can be shared, then the collaborative goals of career education can and will be met. I think all parts of our formal educational system should have a voice in forming career education policies and that both the business-labor-industry-professional-government community and the home and family structure should also have such a voice. This strategy will be most difficult to implement unless fiscal responsibility for career education is shared.

Perhaps this strategy, too, is wrong. The alternative, of course, is to seek categorical career education funds in sufficient amounts to fund all career education efforts. At the federal, state, and local levels, this would constitute a major change in policies now in common existence. This, then, is a second matter on which your advice is badly needed.

"What's Mine is Mine"

A third serious problem can be seen as a "What's mine is mine" attitude. So long as career education was viewed as simply a concept, an attitude, and a point of view, this problem did not exist. That is, where there is no substance, nothing is "taken away" from anyone. It was only when people in career education began to think in terms of programs, rather than simply concepts, that this problem arose.

At this point in time, most persons who write about career education are doing so in programmatic terms. They speak about career awareness, career exploration, career decision-making, career preparation, career entry, and career progression (including re-education) as programmatic elements of career education. Career education programs are being organized in ways that emphasize the important contributions many parts of the formal educational system and the broader community make to various aspects of career education. This trend towards

speaking programmatically about career education was, in its early stages, strongly re-enforced by the 1971 "Position Paper on Career Education" issued by the State Directors of Vocational Education in which the following statements appear:

> "---It is this latter component of Career Education - that of opportunity to prepare for employment - which can be well-served by contemporary programs of occupational education. To deny this climaxing opportunity (---) is to nullify the purpose of Career Education..."
> "2. Career Education is not synonymous with Vocational Education but Vocational Education is a major part of Career Education."

Note that, in this 1971 statement, the State Directors of Vocational Education, while intent on carving out a major part of Career Education for vocational education, emphasized strongly that it was career preparation they were speaking about and that they did not claim other parts of career education as belonging in vocational education.

In a strategy sense, I have been attempting to emphasize the multiple involvement of a wide variety of kinds of personnel - both from within and outside of the formal educational system - in each of the programmatic components of career education. Rather than assign each component to a different segment of persons, I have been trying to demonstrate that, by working together in a collaborative fashion, many segments of both Education and the larger society can make valuable contributions to each of career education's program components. Usually, I think of one kind of personnel as key but with supportive assistance from many others. For example, I think of the elementary teacher as a key person in career awareness, but I look for involvement of parents, counselors, vocational educators, and resource persons from the business-labor-industry-professional community in the total career awareness component of the career education program. I tend not to worry about who gets "credit" for helping students, but, rather, how much help the student receives in this component of career education.

Similarly, I contend that, while vocational educators play a major role in occupational preparation, important roles are also played by academic educators for college bound students and by business and labor personnel for all students. When I think about the career decision making component of career education, I see the career guidance specialist playing a key role, but I do not see him or her as the only functionary in this component of career education. It is this kind of true collaboration that, in my opinion, will allow career education to serve as an integrative force that will bring many parts of the educational system and the larger society together in seeking to attain the goals of career education.

In terms of legislative strategy, my current position is that I would strongly support efforts of both AVA and of APGA to fund functionaries (personnel) from both fields in a wide variety of career education's program components. I do

not feel I can support efforts to claim that the functions themselves are the exclusive right of either vocational education or of guidance personnel. The functions should, it seems to me, be supported in career education legislation. The plea I make is an "anti-turfsmanship" one aimed at assuring that no single part of Education assumes control of any given component of career education. Unless this "anti-turfsmanship" strategy succeeds, the collaborative and integrative goals of career education cannot be met.

At this point, I very much need and want some direct advice. If I am simply "tilting at windmills" where there is no real danger, I need to understand that this is so. If, on the other hand, you agree with me that a problem exists, then I need suggestions and assistance in solving it.

"What's In It For Me?"

Finally, a fourth problem can be thought of as a "What's in it for me?" attitude. The entire research base of the psychology of motivation is illustrative of the fact that no mortal person engages in endeavors that promise no hope of personal benefit. For career education to seek the collaborative efforts of all education personnel, personnel from the business-labor-industry-professional-government community, and from the home and family structure demands that each segment see some sensible answer to the "What's in it for me?" question. The obvious danger, with a movement such as career education which is still young, weak, and undernourished, is one of over-promise and under-delivery. What can and should we promise to those we seek to involve in career education?

To date, our promises have been much more prominent than our products. Among the promises we have made are the following:

- We have promised teachers that, if they follow a career education approach, both they and their students will enjoy school more
- We have promised both parents and businessmen that a career education approach to education will result in students increasing their achievement levels in the basic academic skills
- We have promised vocational educators that career education will raise the status of vocational education and that vocational education will become a true choice to be considered by all students
- We have promised counselors that, in career education, they will have a key and crucial role to play that will increase both the need for and the status of counselors
- We have promised the business-labor-industry-professional-government community that a career education emphasis will result in more persons leaving our educational system equipped work vocational skills, with good work habits, and with a desire to work

- We have promised students, at all levels of education from the elementary school through the university, that a career education emphasis will help them discover a more meaningful set of reasons for learning
- We have promised the humanists in Education that, by including unpaid work as well as paid employment in the career education concept, career education will have a humanizing, rather than a dehumanizing, impact
- We have promised the liberal arts educators that we will emphasize education as preparation for work as one among several basic goals of Education in ways that neither demean nor detract from other goals
- We have promised minorities, the economically disadvantaged, the physically and mentally handicapped, the gifted and talented, females, and adult education students that career education is intended to meet their needs to find work that is possible, meaningful, and satisfying to them.

We have promised all of these things because we have faith that career education can, indeed, deliver on each of these promises. People have believed us and, according to CCSSO preliminary data, approximately 5,000 of the 17,000 school districts in the United States have initiated some form of career education effort. Yet, the hard truth is that, three years and over 60 million dollars of expenditures later, we are essentially still asking all of these groups to accept career education on the basis of our faith in this movement.

Our strategy has been one of concentrating our major operational and evaluation efforts at the point of least resistance - the elementary school. We have hit first that part of Education where the least amount of change is needed and where our chances of obtaining positive results appeared to be greatest. This strategy assumes that, if we can demonstrate concrete successes at the elementary school level, other levels of Education will be encouraged to move in a career education direction. We have purposely, it seems, stayed away from a concentrated emphasis on those points in Education where the results would be most dramatic - i.e., the transition from school to the world of paid employment - because the risks of failure, in these days, seems extremely great.

It may well be that, if we are really serious about attaining the integration of vocational and academic education, we should be concentrating our efforts at that level of education where the two have been in most obvious conflict - the senior high school. Such a strategy, while holding high potential for negative short-term results, also holds high potential for making clear to all concerned the basic concepts of career education in terms of the challenges for change that they hold. Again, we are faced with a problem on which both help and advice is badly needed. Are we promising too much? Are we concentrating delivery of promises on the wrong people and at the wrong levels? What strategy will best ensure the long run survival and success of the career education movement?

Concluding Remarks

The National Association of State Directors of Vocational Education has, since the inception of career education, played a key leadership role in both the conceptualization and the implementation of career education. As a result, the career education movement has evolved in ways that closely approximate the conceptual view contained in the Association's 1971 Position Paper on Career Education. That paper has served as one of my "bibles" in my efforts to further career education. It is now time to assess the results and to decide whether or not the 1971 position of the Association should be re-affirmed or revised. I hope that these remarks may be helpful in making such an assessment a reality.

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